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From the Angan to the Nation

Tarabai Modak's Kosbad Experiment and the Indigenous Roots of India's Anganwadi, 1945-1975 (A Historical Analysis of the Angan Balwadi and the Anganwadi Idea)

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Abstract

India's Anganwadi centre, the village-level facility at the base of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS, launched in 1975), is often said to have originated in the work of Tarabai Modak at Bordi and Kosbad in western Maharashtra. The claim appears in tributes and in the journal literature, including an earlier article by the author, but I have found no study that tests it against the sources. This paper does. It uses Modak's own 1962 monograph for the Ministry of Education, the two main Marathi accounts of her work by Padmaja Phatak and Anutai Wagh, and official and evaluation documents on ICDS, and it splits the claim into three: priority, transmission and structural resemblance. The paper shows that the "Angan Balwadi", a doorstep nursery school for Adivasi and Dalit children, was developed at Bordi from the mid-1940s and appears in print under that name in a Government of India publication thirteen years before ICDS began. It also shows that real institutional channels joined Modak's institution to national child-welfare bodies. It finds, however, no document in which ICDS planners acknowledge the Bordi model, and it finds a separate nutritional lineage that explains the design of ICDS at least as well. The Angan Balwadi is best understood as a documented precedent and a plausible influence on the programme's name and doorstep logic, not as its demonstrated origin.

Keywords: Tarabai Modak, Angan Balwadi, Anganwadi, Integrated Child Development Services, early childhood education, Adivasi.

1. Introduction

The Anganwadi is the part of the Indian state that a small child in a village is most likely to meet. Under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), which began in 1975 in thirty-three blocks, the Anganwadi centre is meant to be the single point at which supplementary nutrition, health checks, immunisation, referral and non-formal preschool education reach a child below six and her mother (Programme Evaluation Organisation [PEO], 2011, pp. 2-3; Somaiah & Vijayalakshmi, 2007).

The name carries an argument. Angan is the Hindi and Marathi word for the yard of a house. A centre called an anganwadi says that the institution should sit at the family's doorstep, and not at the end of a road that the poorest child cannot walk.

One strand of memory holds that this idea was worked out in the 1940s and 1950s at Bordi, a coastal settlement in what was then Thane district of Bombay State, by Tarabai Modak and her colleague Anutai Wagh. Wagh's own memoir treats the anganwadi as the point where the work of the institution found its centre (Wagh, 2008, pp. 111-112). The biography prepared for her 1985 Jamnalal Bajaj Award lists the anganwadi, the balwadi and the kuranshala (meadow school) among the new concepts that came out of her work (Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, n.d.). A recent journal article states that the Anganwadi concept, "a foundational element of ICDS", was created at Bordi, without giving a source (Akshaya, 2023, pp. 238-241).

The claim is plausible, and it would matter if it were true. It is also easy to overstate, for three reasons. ICDS has a documented administrative ancestry in earlier nutrition and child-welfare schemes, which I describe in sections 8 and 9. Tarabai Modak died in 1973, two years before the programme began, so she could not have designed it. And the two fullest accounts of her work,

by Phatak (1981) and Wagh (1980), were written after ICDS existed, which raises the possibility that the later vocabulary shaped how the earlier work was remembered.

An earlier article by the author needs revisiting in this light. It described Modak's Balwadi model as having laid the groundwork for ICDS and the Anganwadi system, and added in a parenthesis that Modak first used the term "Anganwadi". Neither statement was tied to a specific source. The present paper tests both and qualifies them.

The paper therefore asks a narrower question than "who invented the Anganwadi?" It asks what the surviving sources allow us to say about the relation between the Angan Balwadi of Bordi and the Anganwadi of ICDS. I separate three claims and treat them as rungs of a ladder, each harder to reach than the one below.

1. Priority. Did the practice, and the name, exist and appear in the record before ICDS?

2. Transmission. Was there a documented channel by which knowledge of the practice could reach those who designed ICDS?

3. Structural resemblance. Do the two institutions share features that go beyond the name, and where do they differ?

My answers, stated in advance, are these. Priority is established for the sources I could consult. Transmission is established as a possibility, through real institutions, but not as a fact, because no document I have seen records a planner drawing on the Bordi model. Structural resemblance is partial: the doorstep location and the informal education category are shared, while funding, scale, seasonality and the weight given to nutrition are not.

Two terms need defining before going further. First, "indigenous". I use it to mean developed in India, in response to Indian conditions, by Indian practitioners. I do not use it to mean uninfluenced. Tarabai Modak was a Montessori-trained teacher who also worked in the circle of Gijubhai Badheka, and the Angan Balwadi is better read as an adaptation of the balwadi to a setting for which it had not been designed than as a break with that inheritance (Phatak, 1981).

Second, "Kosbad". The title speaks of the Kosbad experiment because the Gram Bal Shiksha Kendra (GBSK), the institution Modak founded at Bordi in 1945, moved to Kosbad Hill in 1957 and is known by that name. The Angan Balwadi, however, belongs to the Bordi years, from the mid-1940s to the early 1950s. Kosbad is where the model was enlarged into the Vikaswadi, where a school for village child-care workers began in 1964, and where the institution later trained Anganwadi workers for ICDS. I treat Bordi and Kosbad as two phases of one experiment and say which phase I mean at each point.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To establish from the surviving sources where and when the Angan Balwadi was devised, and what the practice consisted of, between 1945 and about 1953.

2. To trace the documented institutional channels that connected Tarabai Modak's institution at Bordi and Kosbad with national child-welfare bodies and policy between 1953 and 1975.

3. To test the claim that the Anganwadi of ICDS has "indigenous roots" in this experiment, by separating it into priority, transmission and structural resemblance

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative interpretive-historical method. Memoir, biographical and documentary sources are read against the official record of ICDS, and where sources disagree on a date both are reported. In-text citations follow APA 7th edition; Marathi sources are cited by transliterated title with an English translation in the reference list. The study rests on five kinds of material.

The first is Tarabai Modak's The Meadow School, published in 1962 by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, in its Experiments in Education series, with a foreword by K. L. Shrimali dated 1961 (Modak, 1962). It is the only text in the study that was written and published during her lifetime for a national audience, and it is the earliest place I have found where the term "Angan Balwadi" is printed.

The second and third are the two Marathi accounts. Padmaja Phatak's Shikshantajna Tarabai Modak is a biography, first published in June 1981 (Phatak, 1981). Anutai Wagh's Kosbadchya Tekdivarun is a memoir by the colleague who worked beside Modak from 1945 until Modak's death in 1973. I use the fifth edition of 2008, which reprints the text of 1980 (Wagh, 2008). Both

are close to their subject and both are retrospective. I read them as testimony about practice, which they supply in useful detail, and I am more cautious when they speak about what the practice later became.

The fourth is the official record of ICDS and its predecessors: the Government of India's National Policy for Children of 22 August 1974, the Planning Commission's 2011 evaluation of ICDS, and two scholarly overviews of the programme (Government of India, 1974; PEO, 2011; Somaiah & Vijayalakshmi, 2007; Chathukulam & Joseph, 2025). To this I add N. P. Nawani's paper on nutrition programmes, which gives the dates and sponsors of the Balwadi Nutrition Programme (Nawani, 1994).

The fifth is a Marathi doctoral thesis on Modak's life and work (Sarode, n.d.), with chapters on her legislative work, her writing and her work among Adivasi communities, which I use for her 1952 resolution on pre-primary education (Sarode, n.d., ch. 5).

Three limits shape what follows. First, I have not worked in the archives of the GBSK, the Central Social Welfare Board, the Indian Council for Child Welfare or the ministry that planned ICDS. My statements about what was not documented therefore mean "not in the sources I could consult". Second, a set of interview transcripts with former associates of the institution exists only as unverified draft transcriptions. They have not been checked against the recordings and I have excluded them. Third, the Marathi passages cited here appear in English renderings. Where a point depends on a precise Marathi phrase, I have said so in the note.

Where sources disagree I give both and say which I follow, and I keep to years rather than exact days, since that is the level at which the sources are reliable. The disagreements are not small, and I list the main ones here so that the reader can see how much rests on them. Phatak places the Panchgani meeting between Gandhi and Modak in 1946 in one chapter and, in a note elsewhere, in 1949, which cannot be right because Gandhi was dead (Phatak, 1981, pp. 248, 329). Phatak dates Kasturba Gandhi's death to 1943 and she died in 1944 (Phatak, 1981, p. 247). Wagh dates the fifteen or so anganwadis to "1949 to 53, in seven years", which does not add up (Wagh, 2008, p. 109). Wagh and Phatak both place the founding of the Gram Bal Shiksha Kendra at Bordi in 1945 but differ over the exact day, and over whether teaching began a little before or after the formal opening (Phatak, 1981, pp. 254, 257, 280; Wagh, 2008). I come back to each of these where it matters.

4. The Nursery the Children Did Not Come To: Bordi, 1945-1946

Tarabai Modak did not come to Bordi as a beginner. Phatak describes earlier attempts at rural nursery work before 1942: in the Gujarat countryside, with Nanabhai Bhatt at Gram Dakshinamurti and with Jugatram Dave near Vedchhi in Bardoli, and in a settlement of sanitation workers in Bombay. All of these came to an end with the 1942 movement (Phatak, 1981, pp. 246-250). Gandhi's advice to her at Panchgani, which Phatak places in 1946, was to use locally made materials (Phatak, 1981, p. 248).

The move to the coast came in 1945. Wagh, who had been working with the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, says that Modak sent her ahead to Bordi to prepare the ground, and that work with children began in a rented house later that year (Wagh, 2008; on Wagh's coming from the Kasturba Trust, Phatak, 1981, pp. 250-254). The Gram Bal Shiksha Kendra was formally inaugurated by Balasaheb Kher in 1945 (Wagh, 2008; Phatak, 1981, p. 254). The institution began where such institutions usually began, with a central balwadi in a building, to which children were expected to be sent.

That centre struggled to hold the children it was meant for. S. H. Deshpande's preface to Wagh's memoir sketches the early years in a few lines. Dalit children of one caste came, and those of another stayed away. When both came, caste Hindu families kept their own children at home. At one point the enrolment stood at zero. To draw children in, a colleague went through the village dressed as the Pied Piper, playing a pipe. Wagh herself led a procession with cymbals and drum, singing "Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram", and children were fetched by bullock cart (Wagh, 2008, p. 19, Deshpande's preface). Phatak gives some fifteen pages to the same struggle. She describes a caste boycott that followed the admission of Dalit children and an incident at the village well involving Dalit boys (Phatak, 1981, pp. 256-271). Wagh adds that the roll grew slowly, that the problem of untouchability was dealt with step by step, and that a Satyanarayan puja was held when enrolment reached 101 (Wagh, 2008, p. 106). The accounts are written from the institution's side, and I have not found the villagers' version. What they show is that the centre sat inside the village's social order and could not easily stand outside it.

The Adivasi hamlets lay outside it. Wagh says they stood within half a mile to three-quarters

of a mile of the village. Adivasi men and women came in to sell firewood and leaves or to do day labour. When they stopped at the balwadi for a drink of water they watched the children's games with interest. Told to send their own children, they answered "why not?", but the children did not come. In Wagh's account the teachers then decided to go to the hamlet's yard themselves, and this was the beginning of the anganwadi (Wagh, 2008, p. 106). Modak's own statement of what followed is short:

"we decided to go to their locality and to hold classes in the vicinity of their huts and in the open air … It was these open-air schools, or 'Angan Balwadis' as we called them, that brought us in direct contact with life and problems of the Adivasis." (Modak, 1962, p. 1)

Two features of this origin story matter for what follows. The first is that the Angan Balwadi was a response to a failure of access. It was not first a theory of early childhood. The sources do not say that Modak and Wagh set out in 1945 to invent a new kind of centre. They say that the first kind did not reach the poorest children and that they changed the place of teaching. The second is that the change of place changed what the work was for. In Modak's phrasing, the open-air schools put the staff in "direct contact with life and problems of the Adivasis". The doorstep nursery became a way into the hamlet as well as a way into the child. I take this as the beginning of the institution's wider work among the hamlets, though the sources are more explicit about the contact than about the sequence that followed.

5. What the Angan Balwadi Was

The sources allow a reasonably full picture of the practice, and I set it out here because the comparison with ICDS in later sections depends on it.

The form. A team of about six trainees, with a teacher, went to one hamlet. They looked for a tree in the middle of the hamlet, cleared the ground beneath it, gathered the children, and ran songs, stories, games, colour work and card sewing (Wagh, 2008, p. 106). Phatak calls this the firati balwadi, the roving balwadi, or anganwadi, and records that Modak thought the idea "very original" (Phatak, 1981, pp. 273-274).

The first yard. Wagh names the first anganwadi "Halpat Nivas", a name the team gave it themselves. On the first day the children ran away from the teachers, and there were no adults in the house. The second day was the same, except for a few eyes shining behind a door left ajar. Then the team brought bowls of beads and thread, set them outside the door and stepped aside. The bowls went in and came out again, with the beads strung into necklaces (Wagh, 2008, p. 107).

The first job was washing. Water had to be carried from a distance and in summer was barely enough to drink. The team walked to the yard each day with a bucket holding a mirror, combs, oil, cloths, cymbals and handwork materials, with brooms on their shoulders, and wiped the children down with a wet cloth. Now and then they took them to a well in a nearby hamlet for a bath (Wagh, 2008, p. 107). Phatak describes the same concern as a hygiene programme and adds the materials the teachers used: sand from the beach at Nargol, the aerial roots of banyan trees as brushes, clay, and drums made from newspaper pulp (Phatak, 1981, pp. 275-279). This was in line with Gandhi's advice about locally made materials (Phatak, 1981, p. 248). The materials suggest a pedagogy that expected no purchased equipment. ICDS, whose defining service was state-funded supplementary nutrition, offers a contrast.

Who came. The parents were away at work. Children of eight or ten minded the younger ones at home, and some older children were at the brick kilns for a few annas a day (Wagh, 2008, p. 107). The team had planned for children from two and a half to six, and Wagh says they had to give that limit up, because older brothers and sisters arrived with babies on their hips. So the work was arranged in three groups: games, drill and handwork for the older children, play for the infants laid on sacking, and songs, stories, games and handwork for the balwadi group (Wagh, 2008, pp. 107-108). Modak's own account gives the range as about two to eleven (Modak, 1962, pp. 1-2). Wagh calls the three-group arrangement the preparation for the Vikaswadi. I return to that remark in section 6.

The cost. Phatak states that an Angan Balwadi cost no more than one or two rupees per child per year, leaving out the teacher's salary, but gives no source for the figure (Phatak, 1981, pp. 273-274). The preface to Wagh's memoir, written by S. H. Deshpande, gives a different kind of figure: in 1948 Wagh's monthly budget for running a hamlet balwadi was three rupees, in line with Modak's insistence that rural teaching materials must be cheap (Wagh, 2008, p. 15, Deshpande's preface). The two are compatible if a unit had twenty to thirty children, but that

enrolment is my assumption and neither source gives it. What both figures tell us is that the model was meant to be cheap enough for an institution without a building or a large grant to run.

The calendar. The Angan Balwadi was seasonal and closed in the monsoon (Phatak, 1981, pp. 273-274). It depended on dry weather and a shaded yard. I infer that a programme wanting year-round service could not have kept this form and would have needed a roof.

The training function. The Angan Balwadi was also a classroom for adults. Wagh says that training formed a large part of the work of running an anganwadi (Wagh, 2008, p. 106). Phatak says the anganwadi doubled as the practicum for trainees, and the institution's first major course for gram sevikas of the Kasturba Trust sent its trainees to practise there (Phatak, 1981, pp. 273-274, 280-283; Wagh, 2008, p. 139). Wagh adds that the first balwadi training class began in 1946 and ran for three and a half months (Wagh, 2008). A trainee learned to run a nursery school by running one in a yard. Training remained the institution's main business at Kosbad, as section 8 shows.

The scale and the dates. Wagh says that the sites changed each year and that about fifteen anganwadis ran "in the seven years 1949 to 53", which does not add up (Wagh, 2008, p. 109). She adds that Sushilatai Panandikar, the educationist who was principal of the Graduate Basic Training Centre opened at Bordi in 1946, liked the anganwadis and often went along with her (Wagh, 2008, p. 109). The sources do not give enrolments, the number of children reached, or how many of the fifteen ran in any given season. The evidence is good for the shape of the practice. It does not allow claims about its scale, and the total reach of the Angan Balwadi was probably small compared with what ICDS later attempted.

Wagh sums up the experience in terms that explain why later accounts treat it as foundational. In her telling the anganwadi brought the staff close to Adivasi life and taught them a great deal, and the core of Kosbad's later work was found there (Wagh, 2008, pp. 111-112). That is the memoirist's judgement, written decades afterwards, and it is the strongest internal evidence for the continuity I trace in section 6.

6. From the Yard to the Vikaswadi, 1953-1962

By the early 1950s the institution at Bordi was running a central balwadi, a number of seasonal anganwadis, a training course and a growing set of programmes among the hamlets. Phatak records that in the summer after a personal bereavement in 1952, Modak ran about fifteen anganwadis in the forest areas for three months (Phatak, 1981, p. 313). The practice was therefore still alive in 1953, which is consistent with Wagh's "seven years" counted from 1946.

The next step was to put the services together. In 1953, Phatak says, a trial Vikaswadi was begun near Bordi under Jayantbhai Shukla, and it ran for about three years (Phatak, 1981, p. 314). In her preface to The Meadow School, Modak describes the Vikaswadi, which she dates to 1953, as a "composite unit of a creche, a Balwadi and a primary school" (Modak, 1962, preface and p. 2). Wagh's later description explains how the Bordi age group, from two and a half to six, grew on both sides in the Vikaswadi: a crèche for infants, informal education for older children, and mothers' groups once mothers and pregnant women came along with the infants, with nutrition and health work following. She puts the whole under a heading that reads, in my rendering, "Kosbad's Vikaswadi is an integrated child development centre" and says the experiment covered children from birth to twelve, rarely fifteen (Wagh, 2008, p. 139).

Wagh draws the line between the two herself. The arrangement under the tree, with infants on sacking, a balwadi group and older children, was in her words the preparation for the Vikaswadi (Wagh, 2008, pp. 107-108). In the Vikaswadi the three groups acquired a building: a crèche for the youngest, a balwadi and a primary school. Her later description of Bordi before the move lists the balwadi, the anganwadis, "a small Vikaswadi", a pre-primary training class and the Kasturba Trust course as running side by side (Wagh, 2008, p. 139).

My own reading is that the Vikaswadi is the nearer structural relative of the Anganwadi of ICDS, and the Angan Balwadi the nearer relative of its name. The Angan Balwadi was a visit, a seasonal act of teaching in a yard. The Vikaswadi was a fixed place where a family with children of several ages could be served at one site. ICDS, in a very different register, also tried to gather several services for a young child at one point. This is a comparison across two decades and two scales, and I offer it as interpretation.

The plan, the sanction and the move. A long-term site was needed. Phatak records that a plan was sent to the Government of India in 1955 and sanctioned in 1956, under the Second Five Year Plan. She gives the terms as a central capital grant of about two-thirds and a grant of 60 per

cent of running costs for the first two years. Elsewhere she records a grant of Rs 60,000 with a loan of Rs 56,000 at 5 per cent over thirty years, and a gift of Rs 25,000 from the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (Phatak, 1981, pp. 317-319). These details matter for one reason. They show that the institution's growth in the 1950s depended on central grants flowing to a voluntary agency, which is not the same thing as a state-run service.

The sequence of the move needs care, and I set it out by year. An advance party, Wagh among them, went to Kosbad in 1956 (Wagh, 2008, p. 113; Phatak, 1981, p. 321). The foundation stone was laid and the whole institution moved from Bordi to Kosbad in 1957 (Phatak, 1981, p. 321; Wagh, 2008, p. 127). Indira Gandhi inaugurated the Kosbad institution in 1958 (Phatak, 1981, p. 322). The apparent conflict between 1956 and 1957 disappears once the first year is read as the advance party and the second as the institution as a whole.

The legislative argument. Modak's case for pre-primary education was also made in public. In 1952 she moved a resolution in the Bombay legislature asking that government give pre-primary education some priority, extend it to rural areas and protect it from the effects of financial austerity. She argued that rural pre-primary schools allowed parents to go to work and gave adults a kind of social education (Bombay Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. XX, Part 5, 19 January 1952, p. 248, cited in Sarode, n.d., ch. 5). Shortly before that, in a talk on All India Radio, Bombay, for a workers' audience in 1951, she had made the case for nursery schools for the children of working parents (Modak, 1951). These two texts matter because they place the argument for rural and working-class preschools in the public record of the early 1950s. Neither, as far as I have seen, uses the word anganwadi.

7. The Ministry's Book: The Meadow School, 1962

The Angan Balwadi entered the official literature of the Government of India in 1962. The Ministry of Education published The Meadow School as a volume in its Experiments in Education series, and K. L. Shrimali, then Union Minister of Education, wrote the foreword, dated 1961 (Modak, 1962, foreword).

The book is mainly about the kuranshala, the meadow school of its title. The Angan Balwadi appears on its opening page, as the work that first brought the staff into contact with Adivasi life. Modak's preface also dates the founding of the Nutan Bal Shikshan Sangh to 1926 and its extension to rural areas to 1945, with the GBSK at Bordi as the vehicle (Modak, 1962, preface).

Wagh gives the book a short history of its own. The manuscript was written out of her diary of the work, Modak added her reflections and translated it into English, and J. P. Naik, the educationist, helped with its publication by the Government of India (Wagh, 2008, p. 126). If this account is right, the printed term "Angan Balwadi" came into a government document through a personal route: a diarist, a translator and an educationist who had known the work since the 1950s.

Three observations follow. First, the book is the earliest text I have found in which the term "Angan Balwadi" is printed, thirteen years before ICDS began. That settles priority for the sources I have used, and it is the paper's firmest finding. Second, the term is introduced with a gloss on Angan, but the gloss is addressed to an English-language reader across India, so it does not tell us whether the Ministry already knew the word. Third, circulation may have been limited. The colophon reads "E.D. 317. 1000." If the second figure is a print run, as is usual in government printing, it had a limited circulation. The 1962 publication makes transmission possible. It does not show anyone reading it who later designed ICDS .

8. Channels and a Change of Name, 1959-1975

Between the closing years of Bordi and the launch of ICDS in 1975, the sources describe four kinds of connection between Modak's institution and the bodies that dealt with child welfare. I take them in turn, then ask what they prove.

The Social Welfare Board and the extension project. Wagh says the pre-primary training class at Bordi closed in 1959 because enrolment had fallen, and that a gram sevika course and extension work under the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) followed at once. The extension project gave the institution five main villages and five sub-villages, with five gram sevikas, an industrial-training teacher, a chief sevika, a clerk, three midwives and a jeep. Wagh spent her days travelling among ten villages, starting balwadis, women's centres and literacy classes and organising mothers' groups. Both pieces of work ended after about a year (Wagh, 2008, p. 165). The point for this paper is that by about 1960 a Board-funded rural extension project in the

Dahanu area was already using the institution's staff to start balwadis in villages. My dating is approximate, since Wagh gives only the closing of the Bordi class in 1959 and the start of the school in 1964 as fixed points.

The Child Care Committee. The CSWB appointed a Child Care Committee, and Modak toured the whole of India on its account. One halt was at Kosbad, where the members liked the balwadi and pressed the institution to begin a training class for balsevikas. One of the members was Pushpaben Mehta, who had been a student at Modak's balmandir in Bhavnagar and was then a vice-president of the Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) in New Delhi (Wagh, 2008, p. 165). Modak had seen a balsevika course running in Delhi, whose trainees were all matriculates but mostly left for other work because balwadi teachers were poorly paid. She argued that village balwadi teachers should be admitted with a class seven qualification, and after long discussion the suggestion was accepted and the balsevika training was split into urban and rural streams (Wagh, 2008, pp. 165-166). This is a documented route between Bordi-Kosbad and a national body, through a committee member who had been Modak's student.

The training school. In 1964 Kosbad began the Gram Balsevika Vidyalaya (village child-care workers' school). Wagh, who was its principal from the start, describes an eleven-month course for fifty students on a monthly stipend of fifty rupees, which Mehta insisted she should head. It was the only such school in all India, she says, until two more opened in Gujarat and Assam some three years before she wrote (Wagh, 2008, p. 166). The trainees' practical work included running anganwadis, which Wagh in a parenthesis says one would now call informal education centres (Wagh, 2008, p. 166). The anganwadi had not been left behind at Bordi. It was now a training exercise at Kosbad. Wagh counts 1,060 trainees by the twentieth batch, from all over Maharashtra, and names Pushpaben Mehta and Indira Dey as its guides (Wagh, 2008, p. 141). Wagh also records that the Maharashtra Rural Development Department, with UNICEF's help, began a nutrition training scheme in the state and gave Kosbad a centre for training women in nutrition, child nutrition, child health and kitchen gardens (Wagh, 2008, p. 166).

The official turn. In 1974 the Government of India adopted its National Policy for Children. Among the services it promised were nutrition programmes and informal education for pre-school children from the weaker sections of society (Government of India, 1974, para. 3). Informal pre-school education for the weaker sections is a fair description, in the policy's own words, of what the doorstep nurseries of Bordi had been doing since the 1940s. In 1975 ICDS began in thirty-three blocks, of which nineteen were rural, ten were Adivasi areas (the report's category is "tribal") and four were urban (PEO, 2011, p. 3). Modak had been dead for two years.

What the channels do and do not show. The connections are real. They show that people who knew the Bordi-Kosbad work sat on or near the bodies that shaped national child-welfare policy, that the institution had run a Board-funded rural extension project, and that a Government of India press had printed its central term. They do not show that anyone used it.

One problem is a matter of order. The best-documented link between Kosbad and ICDS itself runs from ICDS to Kosbad, not the reverse. Wagh says that the institution has taken a considerable part since 1976 in ICDS, which she describes as the Government of India's scheme run through the Government of Maharashtra, and that the ICCW in Delhi asked Kosbad to run training for Anganwadi workers (Wagh, 2008, pp. 156-157, 169). Whatever Kosbad contributed as an ICDS training site came after ICDS had been launched. Wagh writes that when she saw the actual syllabus she found that it gave balwadi education very little place. She felt this was a little sad, though she was glad that the scheme was to run in Adivasi hamlets and slums. It was a four-month course (Wagh, 2008, p. 169). On that testimony, the ICDS training course left balwadi pedagogy little room.

The word. Wagh offers her own explanation of the name, and it is the nearest thing to a contemporary statement on the question that I have found. In her words, as I render them, the government has probably accepted the word anganwadi in the sense of "informal education", because till then the anganwadi programme of Kosbad had become known to the educational world and everyone had liked it (Wagh, 2008, p. 169). It is a participant's conjecture, offered in a memoir, and it is worth taking seriously for two reasons. It is precise: it concerns the word and the informal education sense, and the second of these is the phrase the 1974 policy uses. And it comes from someone who ran training and dealt directly with the bodies concerned. It is still not evidence that the word was chosen for that reason. The PEO's report uses the term without explaining it, and I have found no official document that does (PEO, 2011, pp. 2-4).

9. Discussion: Weighing the Claim

9.1 The ladder. *Table 1 sets the three rungs against what the sources show.*

Table 1. The evidence for the Angan Balwadi-Anganwadi connection

Rung	Question	What the sources show	Status
Priority	Did the practice and the name exist and appear in the record before ICDS?	Doorstep balwadis run from Bordi from about 1946 (Phatak, 1981; Wagh, 2008); the term "Angan Balwadi" printed in a Ministry of Education publication in 1962 (Modak, 1962)	Established for the sources consulted; not tested against other contemporaneous programmes
Transmission	Was there a documented channel to those who designed ICDS?	The 1962 publication; training of Kasturba Trust workers; the CSWB extension project and Child Care Committee; the ICCW; the 1964 school	Possible, through real institutions; not shown. No planner's acknowledgment found. Kosbad's ICDS training role begins after the launch
Structural resemblance	Do the two institutions share more than a name?	Shared: doorstep siting, informal pre-school education for the poor. Different: seasonal against year-round, voluntary against government, small against national, pedagogy-led against nutrition-led	Partial

9.2 What ICDS took and what it left.

ICDS shares the location logic of the Angan Balwadi, the idea that the facility belongs where the family lives. It carries the name. It uses the category of informal education for the youngest children of the poor, which Wagh took to be the sense in which the word travelled. And it pursues, on a larger scale, the aim that the Vikaswadi had pursued on a smaller one, of bringing several services to the child at a single site. Whether it took any of these from Bordi is the open question.

It differs on much else. Wagh complained that the training left little room for pedagogy. ICDS was a government programme planned by block, not a voluntary agency's seasonal visits. And its centre of gravity lay elsewhere. Pre-school education was one of its six services, and the account the PEO gives of the programme's origin runs through nutrition programmes, child mortality and the review of earlier schemes, and not through pre-school education (PEO, 2011, p. 3; Somaiah & Vijayalakshmi, 2007).

9.3 A competing lineage.

That account has its own ancestors. The CSWB, founded in 1953, began child-welfare schemes under the Community Development blocks. The Applied Nutrition Programme followed in 1963, and the Special Nutrition Programme and the Balwadi Nutrition Programme in 1970-71 (PEO, 2011, pp. 2-3). The Balwadi Nutrition Programme was run by the CSWB together with four national voluntary organisations: the Indian Council for Child Welfare, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh and the Kasturba National Memorial Trust (Nawani, 1994). The PEO reports that a Planning Commission study found these programmes had "reached only a small percentage of the target groups at the local level", and presents the National Policy for Children of 1974 as a response (PEO, 2011, p. 3).

The point I draw from this is not that the nutrition lineage defeats the Bordi lineage. Two of the four voluntary organisations that ran the Balwadi Nutrition Programme had direct dealings with the Bordi-Kosbad work: the Kasturba Trust, whose gram sevikas were the institution's first trainees, and the ICCW, whose vice-president had been Modak's student and which later asked Kosbad to train Anganwadi workers. The two lineages therefore overlap in their institutions, even if they differ in purpose. This is my inference from two sets of sources. It suggests that the nutrition programmes of 1970-71 were delivered, in part, through voluntary organisations that were no strangers to the Bordi work. Wagh's account of a UNICEF-assisted nutrition training

scheme that placed a women's training centre at Kosbad (section 8) is another point where the two lineages meet.

If that is right, a better formulation than "ICDS came from Bordi" is available. ICDS combined services whose administrative parentage lies in nutrition and community development, a delivery site whose logic and name resemble the Angan Balwadi, and a category of informal pre-school education that Bordi and Kosbad had been practising since the 1940s. Which of these elements came from where is a question for ICDS's own planning files.

9.4 What the title can bear.

The title claims "indigenous roots". On the evidence I have, that phrase is defensible if "roots" means a documented domestic precedent for part of what ICDS became. It is not defensible if it means that ICDS was derived from the Kosbad experiment. I would put the finding as follows: the Angan Balwadi is a documented precedent, with a plausible but unproven influence on the name and doorstep logic of the Anganwadi.

10. Conclusion and Further Research

I have argued that the claim which links Tarabai Modak to the Anganwadi should be broken into three, and that the sources support the three unequally. The practice and the term existed before ICDS and are in the record: the Angan Balwadi at Bordi from about 1946, and the printed term in a Ministry of Education book in 1962. The institution that produced them had real connections with the national bodies of child welfare. But no source I could consult shows ICDS's planners taking the idea from Bordi, the best-documented tie between Kosbad and ICDS begins after the programme was launched, and the programme has an administrative ancestry in nutrition and community development schemes that accounts for its design without needing the Angan Balwadi.

The limits of the study are those of its sources. I have not worked in the institution's own papers or in the files of the ministries. I have not tested priority against other doorstep programmes of the 1940s and 1950s, such as those of the Kasturba Trust, the Harijan Sevak Sangh and the CSWB itself, any of which may turn out to have used the term or the method earlier. I have not examined the Report of the Education Commission of 1964-66 and make no claim about its treatment of pre-primary education. The main Marathi sources were written after ICDS began, and the English renderings of Marathi passages need checking by a fluent reader.

The claim can be settled, or at least moved up the ladder, by documents that exist and that I could not reach:

1. The planning files of ICDS (the Department of Social Welfare, 1974-75), and any note that explains the choice of the word "Anganwadi".
2. The reports of the CSWB, including its Child Care Committee, and the records of the ICCW.
3. The institution's own records at Kosbad: registers, grant files and correspondence with the Ministry of Education about The Meadow School.
4. The periodical Shikshan Patrika for 1946-53, which may date the first written use of anganwadi.
5. The printed volume of the Bombay Legislative Assembly Debates (Vol. XX, Part 5, 19 January 1952), for the text of the pre-primary resolution.
6. UNICEF documentation of Kosbad from the 1970s, including the publication Growing up at Kosbad Hill (1978), which I have seen cited in a thesis bibliography but not read.
7. Oral testimony from former trainees and colleagues, collected after ethics clearance and checked against recordings.

If any of these shows an ICDS planner naming Bordi or Kosbad, the claim moves from precedent to influence. If none does after a proper search, the careful statement is the one this paper has made: a precedent that was well placed to be known, and a name that travelled.

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